

ANN M. DIGIROLAMO
UNITED STATES vs STATE OF GEORGIA

July 28, 2022

1

1 IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
2 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
3 ATLANTA DIVISION

4 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,) CIVIL ACTION
5 Plaintiff,) NO. 1:16-cv-03088-ELR
6 vs.)
7 STATE OF GEORGIA,)
8 Defendants.)
9 - - - - -)

10
11 VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITION OF

12 ANN M. DIGIROLAMO

13
14 Thursday, July 28, 2022, 3:22 p.m., EST

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18
19
20 HELD AT:

21 Robbins Alloy Belinfante Littlefield LLC
22 500 14th Street, N.W.
23 Atlanta, Georgia 30318

24
25 WANDA L. ROBINSON, CRR, CCR, No. B-1973
Certified Shorthand Reporter/Notary Public

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BRANDON BRANTLEY, VIDEOGRAPHER

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1 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: This is the video
2 deposition of Ann DiGirolamo, being taken in
3 the matter of the United States of America
4 versus the State of Georgia.

5 Today's date is July 28th, 2022.

6 The time on the record is 3:22 p.m.

7 My name is Brandon Brantley. I'm the
8 videographer.

9 Wanda Robinson is the court reporter.

10 Counsel, please introduce yourselves for
11 the record, after which the court reporter will
12 swear in the witness.

13 MR. HOLKINS: Patrick Holkins for the
14 United States.

15 MS. COHEN: Francis Cohen for the United
16 States.

17 MR. BEDARD: Ed Bedard for the State of
18 Georgia.

19 - - - - -

20 ANN DIGIROLAMO,
21 being duly sworn, was examined and testified as
22 follows:

23 - - - - -

24 ///

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1 EXAMINATION

2 BY MR. HOLKINS:

3 Q Good afternoon.

4 A Good afternoon.

5 Q Thank you for coming today.

6 Just for the record, could you please
7 spell your full name.

8 A Sure. First name Ann, A-N-N. Last name
9 DiGirolamo, D-I capital G-I-R-O-L-A-M-O. Middle
10 initial M.

11 Q So just a few instructions before we dive
12 into questions.

13 The first is just a heads-up that we will
14 be taking breaks during the deposition at least
15 every 90 minutes. I anticipate we'll take our first
16 break around 4:30. If you need a break before then,
17 please just let us know and we can take a break for
18 a few minutes. I will ask if there is a question
19 pending that you first answer the question before we
20 take a break. Is that okay?

21 A Uh-hum. Okay.

22 Q As you are aware, this deposition is being
23 recorded, it's being transcribed and video recorded.

24 For clarity of the record, I would ask
25 that you let me finish my question before you start

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1 your answer. Is that all right?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Please also answer verbally as opposed to
4 shaking or nodding your head. Is that all right?

5 A Yes.

6 Q It will be helpful, both Frannie and
7 myself, we've both got hearing loss, as Frannie
8 mentioned. If you could project and speak up in
9 your answers.

10 A Okay.

11 Q So I'm going to show you our first
12 exhibit, which is 333.

13 Give me one second and I'll publish it on
14 Zoom. Then I'll give you control of the document so
15 you can scroll through.

16 A Okay.

17 MR. HOLKINS: So I'm publishing Exhibit
18 333.

19 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-333 was
20 marked for identification.)

21 BY MR. HOLKINS:

22 Q And I'm going to give you control of the
23 document. You should now be able to grab it and
24 scroll through it.

25 I ask that you just read the document,

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1 review it, and let me know when you're finished.

2 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

3 A I'm finished.

4 Q Thank you. I'm going to take control of
5 the document back and I'll scroll up to the first
6 page.

7 This is the notice of your deposition in
8 this matter, correct?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Have you seen this document before today?

11 A No.

12 Q Before today, had you heard about this
13 case?

14 A Yes, briefly.

15 Q And what is your understanding of what
16 this case is about based on what you heard before
17 today?

18 A Sure. My understanding is that this is a
19 case where there's concern that youth placed in
20 GNETS schools who have emotional and mental health
21 difficulties and challenges, that there are concerns
22 that they are being more restricted and that the
23 suit is against some of the rights for disabilities.

24 Q Were you aware that Dimple Desai was
25 deposed in this litigation?

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1 A Yes.

2 Q Did you discuss Ms. Desai's testimony in
3 her deposition before today?

4 A No.

5 Q Did you review the transcript of Ms.
6 Desai's deposition in this matter?

7 A No.

8 Q Are you aware that Susan McLaren was
9 deposed earlier today in this matter?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And in the 20 minutes or so between the
12 finishing of that deposition and the start of this
13 one, did you discuss with Ms. McLaren her testimony?

14 A No.

15 Q Have you reviewed transcripts of any other
16 depositions taken in this matter?

17 A No.

18 Q Do you understand that your testimony
19 today is under oath?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Do you understand that being under oath
22 means you have an obligation to tell the truth?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Is there any reason why you cannot testify
25 accurately and truthfully today?

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1 A No.

2 Q Are you taking any medication that would
3 interfere with your ability to answer my questions
4 fully and truthfully today?

5 A No.

6 Q Have you ever been deposed before?

7 A No.

8 Q I'd like to run through some acronyms that
9 we may use today in our questions, just to make sure
10 that we're on the same page.

11 The first one is "DBHDD." Will you
12 understand when I use that term I'm referring to the
13 Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and
14 Developmental Disabilities?

15 A Yes.

16 Q And will you understand when I use the
17 acronym "DCH" that I'm referring to Georgia
18 Department of Community Health?

19 A Yes.

20 Q If I say "DOE," or "GaDOE," will you
21 understand that I'm referring to the Georgia
22 Department of Education?

23 A Yes.

24 Q When I reference "CMOs," do you understand
25 that I mean Care Management Organizations in

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1 Georgia?

2 A Yes.

3 Q Will you understand that "SED" refers to
4 Serious Emotional Disturbances?

5 A Yes.

6 Q When we use the term "GNETS" in today's
7 deposition, will you understand that to mean the
8 Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic
9 Support?

10 A Yes.

11 Q When I use the term "OCYF," or "CYF," will
12 you understand that is a reference to the Office of
13 Children, Young Adults and Families --

14 A Yes.

15 Q -- in DBHDD?

16 A Yes.

17 Q When I refer to "COE," will you understand
18 that as meaning the Georgia State University Center
19 of Excellence?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Will you understand that "CSB," when we
22 use it in today's deposition, means Community
23 Service Board?

24 A Yes.

25 Q And finally, will you understand any

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1 reference to "CDC" as indicating the Center for
2 Disease Control and Prevention?

3 A Yes.

4 Q So I'd like to now pivot to our next
5 document.

6 MR. HOLKINS: I'm publishing Exhibit 334.

7 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-334 was
8 marked for identification.)

9 MR. HOLKINS: For the record, this
10 document is stamped GA02771743.

11 BY MR. HOLKINS:

12 Q It appears from the cover to be an email
13 from you to Rebecca Blanton and others, dated
14 December 18, 2018, and it includes a number of
15 attachments. The subject is "Project AWARE Grant
16 Sections."

17 I'm introducing this primarily to talk
18 about one of the attachments, but if you would like
19 to take a look at your email, you're more than
20 welcome to.

21 I'll give you control.

22 A Thanks.

23 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

24 A Okay.

25 Q Thank you. So let me just ask, what is

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1 Project AWARE?

2 A So Project AWARE has been -- I believe
3 it's typically a SAMHSA funded grant -- sorry.

4 Thank you.

5 Project AWARE is I believe typically a
6 SAMHSA funded grant that has been granted -- I know
7 that the Department of Education received it one
8 time. I believe they may have received it a second
9 time as well. To really build up socioemotional
10 health and provide trainings and services within the
11 schools. And so -- yes.

12 Q When you refer to the Department of
13 Education, was that the Georgia Department of
14 Education?

15 A Yes.

16 Q Sorry. Go ahead.

17 A I was just going to say that in our case
18 that's Georgia Department of Education, but Project
19 AWARE is something that folks nationally can apply
20 to.

21 Q And if I understand your testimony
22 correctly, you know of at least one time when the
23 Georgia Department of Education has received funds
24 through the Project AWARE --

25 A Yes.

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1 Q -- grant?

2 A Yes.

3 Q When was that?

4 A I don't know the exact years. It was
5 several years ago, and I believe that they submitted
6 a reapplication. I believe they received it but I'm
7 not sure. And we are not involved.

8 Q Can you describe what's happening in this
9 email here dated December 18, 2018? What are you
10 emailing about?

11 A Yes. So I am emailing with Rebecca
12 Blanton because they asked us at that time for their
13 Project AWARE application to be their evaluation
14 consultant.

15 So as they were preparing their
16 application, we put together an evaluation plan with
17 all of the necessary materials for that for their
18 grant application. That application was not funded.

19 Q What does it mean to be an evaluation
20 consultant?

21 A It means that we provide our, our
22 expertise in research and evaluation in terms of
23 looking at programs and working with partners to
24 identify what are the best questions to ask in terms
25 of how well programs are working, and then we work

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1 with them to collect the data to be able to answer
2 those questions.

3 Q Have you served -- excuse me.

4 Has the Center of Excellence at the
5 Georgia State University served as evaluation
6 consultant in connection with any other grants
7 received by the Georgia Department of Education?

8 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

9 You can go ahead.

10 A No, not with the Department of Education.

11 Q With any other state agency?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Which one?

14 A Georgia Department of Behavioral Health
15 and Developmental Disabilities.

16 Q In connection with which grant?

17 A Multiple.

18 Q What's the most recent?

19 A The most recent is one that is a SAMHSA
20 funded grant, System of Care, AIME, that is working
21 within several different communities within the
22 State delivering services, and we provide evaluation
23 around those services that's not related to the
24 schools.

25 Q What services are provided through this

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1 AIME grant?

2 A Great question, because I'm not integrally
3 involved in the day to day. I mean they're
4 behavioral health services. They're working with a
5 couple of the provider agencies in terms of
6 providing trainings and looking at how those
7 services are impacting their communities.

8 Q Are those services funded through the AIME
9 grant provided in school settings?

10 A No, not to my knowledge.

11 Q Who is point person for that evaluation
12 project within the Center of Excellence?

13 A So I am kind of providing the overall
14 oversight. Russell Carleton is involved in leading
15 the evaluation.

16 Q What are the other grants for DBHDD where
17 the Center of Excellence has served as an evaluation
18 partner?

19 A There are a lot.

20 Q Just to narrow the scope, within the last
21 -- from 2020 forward, what are the other grants
22 where the Center of Excellence has served as
23 evaluation partner for DBHDD?

24 A We are working with the Department of
25 Behavioral Health Developmental Disabilities, as

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1 well as several other groups, community
2 organizations within the State, for a HSRA grant,
3 where we are building capacity within pediatrician's
4 offices around behavioral health, and we have an
5 evaluation component there.

6 Through our state funding with DBHDD, we
7 provide evaluation services for the Georgia Apex
8 Program.

9 We provide evaluation services for the
10 wraparound services and the IC3 program.

11 I'm trying to think of the other
12 evaluation services.

13 We work with the State on recovery
14 oriented cognitive therapy, but that's with adults,
15 not children. And we evaluate the trainings
16 provided.

17 Q Do you provide any evaluation services in
18 connection with Crisis Stabilization Units in
19 Georgia?

20 A Not me personally. Our staff does do some
21 monitoring and evaluation of some of those units and
22 providing kind of ongoing feedback.

23 Q And what about the Clubhouse?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Is that another example?

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1 A Yes, that's a great example.

2 Q Where your staff -- I should say staff at
3 the Center of Excellence, are providing evaluation
4 in connection with implementation of the Clubhouses
5 in Georgia?

6 A Yes.

7 Q When we use the acronym "SAMHSA," I want
8 to clarify for the record that means Substance Abuse
9 and Mental Health Services Administration, correct?

10 A Yes.

11 Q So I would like to pull up one of the
12 attachments to this email, which is your
13 biographical sketch, dated December 2018.

14 Give me one second and I'll pull that up
15 to the screen.

16 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
17 we're marking at Exhibit 335 for the record.

18 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-335 was
19 marked for identification.)

20 MR. HOLKINS: This document is stamped on
21 the first page GA02771758.

22 BY MR. HOLKINS:

23 Q Ma'am, what is this document?

24 A So that is my biographical sketch, which
25 we often need to put in with grant applications,

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1 particularly federal grant applications, that list
2 out my background and experience.

3 Q So I'm going to give you control of the
4 document, and I'll give you an opportunity to review
5 it. The question I'm going to ask you after you've
6 reviewed it is whether it's accurate, whether you
7 have any updates.

8 So let me just give you control now. You
9 should be able to click on the document.

10 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

11 A I don't know that I have necessarily any
12 updates. Each bio sketch -- there's part of it that
13 is specific to the grant application. But I think
14 the information in here is accurate.

15 Q Thank you.

16 A Yes.

17 Q Let's talk a little bit about your
18 educational background. You have a Ph.D., correct?

19 A Yes.

20 Q From where?

21 A A Ph.D. from Indiana University.

22 Q What was the Ph.D. in?

23 A Clinical psychology.

24 Q Did you have a -- did you complete a
25 dissertation as part of that Ph.D.?

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1 A Yes.

2 Q What was the subject of the dissertation?

3 A That was a long time ago.

4 It was adherence to treatment among
5 adolescents with cystic fibrosis, and also looking
6 at the different stressors and coping mechanisms
7 that adolescents with cystic fibrosis may use.

8 Q Do you maintain any current licensures?

9 A Yes.

10 Q What are they?

11 A I'm licensed as a clinical psychologist
12 here in Georgia.

13 Q Are you practicing?

14 A No.

15 Q Do you have experience -- excuse me.

16 Do you have experience implementing
17 clinical trials?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Could you describe the most recent
20 clinical trial that you have experience
21 implementing?

22 A Yes. It's been a while, and it was not a
23 clinical trial in terms of a drug trial. It was a
24 clinical randomized control trial with a nutritional
25 intervention with school-aged children in Guatemala.

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1 Looking at whether zinc may --

2 THE WITNESS: Can you hear me? Speak
3 louder still?

4 A Whether zinc, providing zinc
5 supplementation for children in school-age years may
6 help to alleviate some of their mental health
7 symptoms.

8 Q When was this study conducted?

9 A It was probably around 2003 or 2004 to
10 2008, when I was at Emory.

11 Q And since then do you have any experience
12 leading or implementing randomized clinical studies?

13 A No.

14 Q And that includes from your work with the
15 Center of Excellence, correct?

16 A Yes. Our work, because of the type of
17 work we do, we don't do randomized control trials.

18 Q Can you explain why?

19 A Sure. When we are working with partners
20 and programs that are out in the field, it's really
21 not possible to randomize. So we will look for
22 other ways to evaluate and to look at things.

23 MR. HOLKINS: One second.

24 A Sure.

25 Q Is it correct Dimple Desai is no longer

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1 employed by the Georgia University Center of
2 Excellence?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Are you aware of the circumstances
5 surrounding her departure from that role?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Why did she leave that job?

8 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

9 THE WITNESS: Does that mean I can answer?

10 MR. BEDARD: Any time I object, you can
11 answer unless I instruct you not to answer.

12 A Yes. In conversations with her, she was
13 ready for a new chapter and a new adventure, and so
14 we support her on that.

15 She is continuing to work with us as a
16 part-time employee on a few things just for a short
17 time.

18 Q In this transition period, what is Ms.
19 Desai assisting the Center of Excellence with?

20 A Sure. We are working on helping to
21 develop some briefs with the Carter Center around
22 what best practices are for universal prevention for
23 school-based behavioral health. So we are going to
24 pull on her expertise to help with that.

25 Q Is that work funded by the Carter Center?

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1 A Not yet, but, yes, it will be. I don't
2 know where their funding comes from.

3 Q So I'd like to set aside this document for
4 now.

5 What is your current title at the Georgia
6 State University Center of Excellence?

7 A I'm the director of behavioral health at
8 the Georgia Health Policy Center.

9 I'm the director of the Center of
10 Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health.

11 And I am a research associate professor in
12 the School of Social Work.

13 Q So I want to break that down.

14 A Sure.

15 Q Because I understand those are two
16 different roles.

17 Could you describe briefly what your
18 duties are as director of behavioral health at the
19 Georgia Health Policy Center?

20 A Yes. I am part of the executive team for
21 the Georgia Health Policy Center. So we have a CEO
22 and then there are four of us who are content
23 directors and a few others, director over admin,
24 director over marketing.

25 So my role is just to help oversee the

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1 behavioral health work that happens in the Center
2 from a balcony view, look for additional
3 opportunities.

4 My role is also heavy involvement in the
5 running and the management of the Center in
6 collaboration with my colleagues on the executive
7 team.

8 Q Do you have staff directly reporting to
9 you in your capacity as behavioral health director
10 at GHPC?

11 A Yes.

12 Q How many?

13 A Five or six.

14 Q So let's shift now to the COE role. As
15 director of the Center of Excellence, what are your
16 duties?

17 A There is some overlap with the overall
18 director of behavioral health role, but my specific
19 role is to oversee the Center of Excellence for
20 behavioral health team, which is about 30 to 35
21 staff, mainly full-time, a few part-time. To work
22 with -- I also have a leadership team, and they are
23 overseeing different portfolios and areas of work.
24 So to work with them as they also work with staff.

25 To develop work, to carry out our work, to

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1 network, to continue to make sure that folks are
2 aware that we can support partner agencies around
3 research, evaluation, training, and policy analysis.

4 Q And just to complete the trilogy, what
5 does your work entail as a research associate
6 professor?

7 A So that is -- a research faculty on the
8 School of Social Work. So I partner with some of
9 the faculty there on research projects, on
10 manuscripts, and support -- go to faculty meetings
11 and support as I can.

12 Q In your capacity at the Health Policy
13 Center and COE is it part of your job to seek out
14 funding opportunities?

15 A Yes.

16 Q Including federal grants?

17 A Yes.

18 Q And in your capacity at the Center of
19 Excellence and at the Health Policy Center, do you
20 work directly with staff at DBHDD?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Who are your primary counterparts at
23 DBHDD?

24 A We work very directly with Dante McKay,
25 who is the director of the Office of Children, Young

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1 Adults and Families.

2 We work occasionally with Monica Johnson,
3 who is the division director.

4 We work with Layla Fitzgerald as part of
5 Apex.

6 We work with -- there are lot of people we
7 work with. We work with Nyka Greene over some of
8 the prevention work, Cristal Davidson around
9 substance use work.

10 We were working on the adult side with
11 Terry Timberlake, and there is a new director.
12 She's no longer there and we just met her and I'm
13 blanking on her name.

14 Q On the children and adolescent side, how
15 regularly do you -- are you in contact with Dante
16 McKay?

17 A We attend a lot of the same meetings. I
18 would say we have touched bases probably quarterly.

19 Q What's a touch base?

20 A It is to just have a meeting with him,
21 talk about the deliverables in our contract, see if
22 there are areas that we need to think about, what's
23 going well, where there may be some challenges.

24 We -- yeah.

25 Q Are these solo meetings, just you and

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1 Dante McKay?

2 A Sometimes it's just me and Dante.

3 Sometimes it is myself along with Renee Johnson, who
4 is on my staff, and the director of the System of
5 Care and oversees the IDT. Sometimes it is with
6 myself and Astrid Prudent, who is on my leadership
7 team, who is helping to oversee the mechanics of our
8 contract with him.

9 And then occasionally it's with our larger
10 leadership team as we're thinking about the next
11 year's deliverables.

12 Q When you reference contract, you're
13 talking about the contract between the Georgia State
14 University Center of Excellence and DBHDD that
15 defines the scope of work that the Center of
16 Excellence will be performing in that fiscal year --

17 A Yes.

18 Q -- is that accurate?

19 A Yes. Yes, that's accurate.

20 Q Give me one second. I'm going to show
21 another document.

22 A Sure.

23 Q There are few steps. I have to disclose
24 this to counsel, so just give me a minute.

25 MR. HOLKINS: So I've just published what

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1 we're marking as Exhibit 335 -- one second.

2 So this will be Exhibit 336.

3 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-336 was
4 marked for identification.)

5 BY MR. HOLKINS:

6 Q It's an email. From its cover it appears
7 to be an email from you dated November 17, 2021.

8 MR. HOLKINS: I'll note for the record at
9 the bottom of the email -- the first page of
10 this document we see the stamp GA03967230.

11 BY MR. HOLKINS:

12 Q Ma'am, what are you sending with this
13 email?

14 A So with this email I am forwarding -- we
15 are also working with DBHDD on -- it is an
16 adaptation of wraparound. It's moderate care
17 customized coordination.

18 Russell and Susan are really over this
19 contract. It came to me, so I am forwarding to them
20 so that they can review, make sure that the scope of
21 work, the budget match with what they have discussed
22 with our folks at DBHDD, so that we can then process
23 it through the University.

24 Q So who authored the contract that you're
25 attaching here?

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1 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

2 A DBHDD.

3 Q They sent it to you, and then you in turn
4 are forwarding it to Susan and Russell?

5 A To review, yes.

6 Q Is also that the process for the
7 overarching scope of work contract between COE and
8 DBHDD?

9 A You mean the large OCYF contract?

10 Q Correct.

11 A No. Myself and Astrid are the ones who
12 really are more intimately -- know more about that
13 contract. So we would be the one to be -- we put
14 together the proposal each year. We review, make
15 sure the scope of work and things are correct.

16 Q Give me a second. I'm going to show you
17 the attachment.

18 A Sure.

19 MR. HOLKINS: So I've just published what
20 we're marking as Exhibit 337.

21 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-337 was
22 marked for identification.)

23 MR. HOLKINS: For the record, the stamp on
24 the first page is GA03967232.

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1 BY MR. HOLKINS:

2 Q Ma'am, is this the contract that you
3 attached to the email we just discussed?

4 And feel free to take a look. I can give
5 you control.

6 A I don't have memorized the amount, and so
7 because we have multiple contracts, let me see.

8 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

9 A I'm looking for the scope of work.

10 Q Take your time.

11 A Okay. Yes.

12 Q I want to direct you to Page 2 of this
13 contract, under the section titled "Mailing
14 Addresses," No. 2.

15 A Yes.

16 Q You are identified as the point of contact
17 for the Georgia State University Center of
18 Excellence, correct?

19 A Yes. I often receive the contracts
20 because I'm the director, and we also have certain
21 people who can PI.

22 So I often get them, but the program
23 director and the folks overseeing it are the ones
24 who then are carrying out a lot of that.

25 Q Do you sign -- did you sign this contract?

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1 A No, I don't sign. It has to be signed by
2 the officials at the University.

3 Q Do you -- are you also identified as the
4 point of contact on the OCYF contract that we
5 discussed earlier?

6 A Yes. Yes.

7 Q Could you describe how moderate customized
8 care coordination is different from intensive
9 customized care coordination?

10 A I'm not sure because I'm not involved in
11 the nitty-gritty of the work.

12 Intensive care coordination really is
13 focused on those youth with more serious
14 difficulties in terms of those wraparound services.

15 I think that modern care -- customized
16 care coordination is supposed to be a slightly --
17 diminished isn't the right word but it's a softer
18 version of that, for youth who may not have as many
19 of the serious concerns.

20 Q Do you know how many providers of the MC3
21 service there are in Georgia currently?

22 A No. I know for IC3, and I'm assuming that
23 MC3 will also work with them, but a lot of that
24 program is still in development.

25 Q Just to make sure I understand your

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1 testimony, is it your expectation that the same care
2 management entities that are providing the IC3
3 service will also offer the MC3 service?

4 A I think so, but I'm not sure.

5 Q At present, are you aware of any children
6 actually being enrolled in the MC3 service in
7 Georgia?

8 A No.

9 Q They aren't, or are you not aware?

10 A I'm not aware.

11 Q Was the development of the MC3 service an
12 idea proposed by DBHDD, or the Center of Excellence?

13 A It was an idea, to my knowledge, proposed
14 by DBHDD.

15 Q Setting aside this document, as part of
16 your duties at the Center of Excellence or the
17 Health Policy Center, do you communicate with
18 Commissioner Judy Fitzgerald?

19 A Occasionally.

20 Q About what?

21 A I know that I have attended the Behavioral
22 Health Coordinating Council meeting once or twice
23 before Renee Johnson came on board. That would not
24 be one-on-one communication. That would be hearing
25 as she presents.

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1 I have communicated with her at some of
2 the events that have happened, the Children's Mental
3 Health Day that happens in May.

4 We were part of a meeting also with our
5 dean in terms of potential collaborations, but I
6 haven't had a whole lot of one-on-one with her.

7 Q Do you coordinate directly with any staff
8 at the Department of Community Health in your
9 capacity at COE?

10 A No, not at this time.

11 Q Previously?

12 A Yes, when there were folks there that
13 we've worked with, but I'm not our main DCH contact.

14 Q Who is the main DCH contact at the Center
15 of Excellence?

16 A Angie Snyder.

17 Q How long has she been the main DCH contact
18 at the Center of Excellence?

19 A Oh, for -- even before I got there, and
20 I've been there almost nine years.

21 Q Did you coordinate at all with Frank Berry
22 when he was leading the Department of Community
23 Health?

24 A No, not personally.

25 Q Do you coordinate directly with any staff

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1 at the Georgia Department of Education in your
2 capacity at the Center of Excellence?

3 A Yes. We were -- having a lot of
4 interaction with Rebecca Blanton because she was the
5 co-chair for the Interagency Directors Team several
6 years ago. Our communication has been much less.

7 We have worked somewhat with Ashley
8 Harris, and Garry McGiboney when he was at the
9 Department of Education.

10 Q And what do you work with Ms. Harris on
11 when you to work with her?

12 A We have just had some -- do you need me to
13 pause?

14 Q Please go ahead.

15 A We've had conversations with her about how
16 we can be helpful in coordinating and addressing
17 school-based mental health services. Because of our
18 work with DBHDD and the Georgia Apex Program,
19 thinking broadly as well about school-based -- or
20 mental health services within the schools and
21 whether there are opportunities.

22 We had communicated at one point about
23 pursuing a grant opportunity. That didn't happen.

24 Q Do you ever communicate with Ms. Harris or
25 any staff at the Georgia Department of Education

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1 about the GNETS program?

2 A No.

3 Q Is that true since you joined the Center
4 of Excellence nine years ago?

5 A Yes.

6 Q Are you aware of the pilot program at
7 South Metro GNETS to implement high-fidelity
8 wraparound?

9 A Yes. I know that we were engaged by
10 them -- it was a few years ago -- to do some
11 training around wraparound services.

12 Astrid Prudent has been involved in that,
13 and I believe that we were also engaged to do some
14 evaluation of that training and those services. I
15 don't know where that landed.

16 Q Did you have any involvement in the
17 evaluation process for that pilot?

18 A Me personally, no.

19 Q Other than the individuals you listed,
20 Ashley Harris, Rebecca Blanton, Garry McGiboney, do
21 you coordinate with anyone at the Department of
22 Education?

23 A I can't think of anyone else.

24 Cheryl Blan -- Cheryl, Cheryl Benefield.
25 But it's been a while.

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1 Q Do you have a standing meeting with any
2 staff at the Department of Education?

3 A No, I don't. My staff have a regular
4 meeting with DBHDD around the Georgia Apex Program.
5 And the Department of Education, some of those staff
6 have attended. I don't know how regularly they are
7 attending.

8 Q You referenced a grant opportunity that
9 you discussed with Ashley Harris. Is that correct?

10 A That was with Rebecca Blanton -- oh, I
11 see.

12 Yes, it was -- I don't remember where the
13 funding opportunity came from. It may have been
14 SAMHSA, but it was to kind of expand school-based
15 mental health services across the State.

16 Q I'd like to show you a couple of
17 documents. If you just give me a minute, I'll pull
18 them together.

19 A Sure.

20 Is it appropriate to give a point of
21 clarification on something we just talked about?

22 Q Absolutely. Please go for it.

23 A So when you asked about the evaluation of
24 the South Metro, I am listed as the PI on that, but
25 I have not been integrally involved on that.

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1 Q PI means principal investigator?

2 A Kind of overseeing, yeah, kind of the
3 initial proposals and those types of pieces. So
4 point of contact. But it's Astrid and I believe
5 Susan who have been more involved.

6 Q Susan McLaren?

7 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

8 MR. HOLKINS: I'm publishing what we're
9 marking as Exhibit 338.

10 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-338 was
11 marked for identification.)

12 MR. HOLKINS: For the record, this
13 document is Bates-stamped on the first page
14 GA00572261.

15 BY MR. HOLKINS:

16 Q And this is an email thread that includes
17 both yourself and Ashley Harris and a number of
18 other individuals, including Garry McGiboney and
19 Cheryl Benefield.

20 I'll give you an opportunity to
21 familiarize yourself with the full chain. Give me a
22 second and I will give you control.

23 You have control of the document. Please
24 let me know when you're reviewing it.

25 A And that was in reference to what I was

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1 just talking about, the opportunity that we reach
2 out to them about.

3 Q Thank you.

4 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

5 A Okay.

6 Q Thank you. So let me just note that this
7 email thread starts in May, May 29, 2020. It's the
8 first email, and the last one is June 12, 2020.

9 I want to start at the bottom.

10 You received an email from Lisa McGarrie.
11 Who is that?

12 A So Lisa McGarrie was on staff with us.
13 She was part of our leadership team, and she was
14 leading the policy and finance work. And so as part
15 of that work, when any of us come across
16 opportunities that we think might be helpful, we
17 pass them on, which is what she did.

18 She is no longer working with us.

19 Q Ms. McGarrie writes in her email: "State
20 education agency must be the lead"?

21 A Yes.

22 Q What's your understanding of that?

23 A That means that we as the Center of
24 Excellence and as a University could not be the
25 prime or the lead in applying for this grant. So it

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1 would need to be the state education agency that
2 applies.

3 So we were reaching out to see if there
4 was interest from our state education agency to
5 apply, and we could support with proposal writing as
6 well as the evaluation, and the response from Ashley
7 after discussing with her group was that they
8 weren't ready to apply at that time.

9 MR. HOLKINS: Just one second, please.

10 A Sure.

11 Q Before we get too far ahead of ourselves,
12 what was Ms. McGarrie's title when she worked in the
13 Center of Excellence? Do you remember?

14 A She started out as a Senior Research
15 Associate, and then moved into an assistant project
16 director position, and she was the lead for policy
17 and -- policy and finance within the Center of
18 Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health.

19 Does that not --

20 Q That's fine. So the policy and finance is
21 a component within the Center of Excellence,
22 correct?

23 A Yes. Sorry.

24 So with her GSU title, what started out as
25 senior research associate, she moved to assistant

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1 project director.

2 Within our team we developed designated
3 leads. So there are two folks leading the workforce
4 development training capacity building, two folks
5 leading research and evaluation, and then Lisa was
6 leading the overall -- it's really more the policy
7 work, and she was also leading work on infant and
8 early childhood mental health.

9 Q Did she have any responsibilities over
10 project development in her role?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Could you describe what those were?

13 A We all have those responsibilities of
14 looking for potential opportunities, funding
15 opportunities, if they're federal, and they are
16 relevant to us. If we can apply -- if they involve
17 partners, reaching out to partners. Also sharing,
18 there may be opportunities that those in the
19 community are well-positioned for, you know, sharing
20 those opportunities.

21 So we are all in that because we're a soft
22 money shop.

23 Q A soft money shop?

24 A Sorry. Yes.

25 Q Could you explain that?

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1 A We are most fully grant funded.

2 Q What would a hard money shop be?

3 A That would be -- you might be in a
4 university setting where you have a faculty position
5 where there is hard money that comes from whatever
6 sources, and you have a guaranteed salary, a
7 guaranteed -- yes.

8 Q Like a line item in a budget?

9 A Could be.

10 Q Okay. Is it -- I want to go back to this
11 first email from Ms. McGarrie where she says "state
12 education agency must be the lead."

13 Is it common for federal grants to require
14 state agency -- or a state agency be the primary
15 applicant?

16 A Yes. I don't know if it would be common
17 but it does -- yes, it does happen.

18 Q In your email dated May 29, 2020 you write
19 to Garry McGiboney, Rebecca Blanton, Cheryl
20 Benefield, and Ashley Harris, in part: "We wanted
21 to make sure you are aware of the below grant
22 opportunity for building school-based mental health
23 services."

24 Do you recall the specifics of how this
25 grant would build school-based mental health

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1 services?

2 A I think the specifics were primarily up to
3 those who were writing the proposals. And so I
4 don't recall the exact criteria in terms of what --
5 again, I believe this was from SAMHSA. I'm not
6 positive, but, you know, that would be part of the
7 evaluation of the proposal, is what the mechanisms
8 are, what the services are that are put into that
9 proposal.

10 Q If you scroll down to the very bottom of
11 the document.

12 A I see it. It's from the department -- the
13 Department of Education.

14 Q That was the source of the grant?

15 A Okay.

16 Q Is that accurate?

17 A I believe so, based on this.

18 Q So it seems like based on your
19 recollection that there was some flexibility in
20 designing a proposal to receive this funding to
21 build school-based mental health services, correct?

22 A Yes. If I'm recalling correctly, the
23 purpose was to expand school-based mental health
24 services throughout the state.

25 Q Skipping ahead in the chain -- or moving

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1 up in the chain, on May 29, 2020, Ms. Harris writes
2 back, in part: "I want to include both Dante McKay
3 and Layla Fitzgerald on this communication as we are
4 working on several projects to establish higher
5 collaboration."

6 Moving forward to Ms. Harris' email dated
7 June 12, 2020, this is the email, correct, where she
8 informs you the Department of Education will not be
9 moving forward with the grant?

10 A Correct.

11 Q And based on her email, what's your
12 understanding of why the Department of Education
13 chose not to move forward with this grant?

14 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

15 A From the email and from what I recollect,
16 they were at a point where they wanted to do some
17 more kind of internal mapping of what's available,
18 where the need is, and really get themselves more
19 ready to apply for some of these types of grants.

20 Q Do you have any knowledge about that
21 internal mapping project within the Georgia
22 Department of Education?

23 A No.

24 Q Have you received any updates from Ms.
25 Harris or other staff at the Georgia Department of

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1 Education about that mapping project?

2 A No.

3 Q Do you know whether the Georgia Department
4 of Education has in fact undertaken any
5 comprehensive internal inventory, as described in
6 this email?

7 A I would assume, but I do not know for
8 sure. I have not seen anything.

9 I, I know that they are having a lot of
10 conversations and that there is a lot of work that's
11 happening there around school-based mental health,
12 but I don't know anything about the specifics.

13 Q Since this email exchange in June of 2020,
14 has the Center of Excellence partnered with the
15 Georgia Department of Education on any grants to
16 expand school-based mental health services?

17 A No.

18 Q Since this email, have you brought to the
19 attention of staff at the Georgia Department of
20 Education any grant opportunities to expand
21 school-based mental health services?

22 A I don't think so.

23 Q Do you know if any of your staff have done
24 that?

25 A I don't think so.

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1 Q I'm going to set this document aside.
2 So we're going to take a break shortly but
3 I would like to quickly introduce a number of
4 exhibits, have you describe what they are. It
5 shouldn't take long.

6 Just give me one second and I'll pull them
7 all up.

8 A Sure.

9 MR. HOLKINS: Counsel, I just sent the
10 email that I will be introducing along with all
11 of the attachments.

12 MR. BEDARD: Thank you.

13 I've just published what we're marking as
14 Exhibit 339.

15 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-339 was
16 marked for identification.)

17 MR. HOLKINS: For the record, this
18 document is stamped GA00654336.

19 BY MR. HOLKINS:

20 Q From its cover it appears to be an email
21 from you dated December 2nd, 2019, to Dante McKay,
22 with the subject "Forward: Sending brief outlines
23 to DBHDD."

24 I'll give you control of the document so
25 you can review it. Please let me know when you're

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1 finished.

2 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

3 A I'm finished.

4 Q I want to acknowledge that there is an
5 email below yours dated December 2, 2019, from Ani
6 Scott Whitmore. Who is Ani Scott Whitmore?

7 A So Ani Scott Whitmore was also on our
8 team. She recently has also left and is doing more
9 independent consulting.

10 She has had multiple roles. She was my
11 supervisee. She did work on the Georgia Apex
12 Program and was the evaluation lead at the time.

13 That's who that is. And she was a senior
14 research associate.

15 Q And you mentioned that Ms. Whitmore has
16 since left the Center of Excellence, correct?

17 A Yes. Just recently.

18 Q What was the purpose of your email to
19 Dante McKay?

20 A So as the director of the center, we try
21 to consolidate a lot of the correspondence that
22 happens. And so my purpose was to send to him -- I
23 don't remember the specifics of the briefs around
24 Apex because we've done multiple, but to send him
25 for his feedback some proposed outlines for these

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1 topical briefs around Apex, and then upon his
2 feedback we would incorporate that.

3 Q Did Dante McKay ask the Center of
4 Excellence to submit these potential topic briefs?

5 A Did he ask us to do those briefs? Yes --
6 or --

7 Q I guess my question is, are you providing
8 these documents in response to a request by Dante
9 McKay?

10 A Yes. So that was part of our scope of
11 work with them around Apex, was to develop certain
12 briefs to try to disseminate information about the
13 program.

14 Q And did your staff choose the topics that
15 are covered in these briefs, or were those requested
16 by Dante McKay?

17 A I believe that the topics were decided and
18 discussed in partnership. And so they had some
19 ideas, and then we may also have put some of our
20 suggestions and input in.

21 Q And did all of these proposed briefs
22 ultimately get drafted?

23 A I believe so. I know we've had, I would
24 say, four to five Apex briefs. I don't know again
25 specifically which ones this email is referring to.

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1 Q When the Center of Excellence does a --
2 completes an issued brief for OCYF staff about Apex,
3 are those circulated publicly or just to DBHDD
4 staff?

5 A If we receive approval from DBHDD, from
6 Dante McKay, that this is final and it's okay for
7 public dissemination, then, yes, we post it on our
8 website and we're free to disseminate widely.

9 Q Has Dante McKay or any other staff at OCYF
10 ever requested the Center of Excellence draft an
11 issue brief on GNETS programs?

12 A No.

13 Q And to be clear, that would include issue
14 briefs about the adequacy of behavioral health
15 services interventions offered through the GNETS
16 programs?

17 A To my knowledge, we've not been requested
18 to do any type of issue brief related specifically
19 to GNETS.

20 Q So I would like to just run through these
21 attachments and introduce them as exhibits, and then
22 we'll take a break.

23 A Sure.

24 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
25 we're introducing as Exhibit 340.

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1 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-340 was
2 marked for identification.)

3 MR. HOLKINS: For the record, this
4 document is stamped GA00654337. The title is
5 "The Georgia Apex Program: Rural Workforce."

6 BY MR. HOLKINS:

7 Q Ma'am, do you know whether this proposal
8 resulted in a published brief?

9 A Yes.

10 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

11 A Yes, it did.

12 Q So this --

13 A I believe so.

14 Q So the end point of this document is
15 publicly available, correct?

16 A I believe so.

17 Q Did you have any role in developing the
18 issue brief relating to rural workforce in Apex?

19 A No.

20 Q Who drafted that?

21 A That is a great question. I, I am not
22 positive. I'm sure that Dimple was involved as the
23 lead for school-based mental health in Apex. I
24 believe that Lisa McGarrie has been involved in some
25 of the writings of briefs as well, and she has some

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1 rural health experience.

2 I'm not positive who offered this brief.

3 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
4 we're marking as Exhibit 341.

5 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-341 was
6 marked for identification.)

7 MR. HOLKINS: This document is stamped
8 GA00654338.

9 The title is "Georgia Apex Program: Best
10 Practices for Assessing Implementation
11 Readiness."

12 BY MR. HOLKINS:

13 Q Ma'am, what is your understanding of the
14 term "implementation readiness"?

15 A This term is about whether or not schools
16 are ready to partner with Apex providers and have
17 specific criteria in terms of being ready to
18 implement things effectively.

19 I can't tell you exactly what those things
20 are, but yes.

21 Q Did OCYF staff approve for publication by
22 the COE a final issue brief related to best
23 practices for implementation of readiness?

24 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

25 A I believe so, yes.

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1 Q Who drafted that brief for the COE?
2 A I believe that Dimple was leading on this.
3 I am not positive.

4 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
5 we're marking as Exhibit 342.

6 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-342 was
7 marked for identification.)

8 MR. HOLKINS: This document is marked
9 GA00654339. The title is "The Georgia Apex
10 Program + School Climate."

11 BY MR. HOLKINS:

12 Q Ma'am, what is your understanding of the
13 term "school climate"?

14 A So school climate is -- and we've done
15 quite a bit of work on this, but school climate is
16 the environment within the school setting. It
17 includes attendance, school attendance. It includes
18 school disciplinary incidents. It includes kind of
19 safe and positive learning environment.

20 And so there is a lot of work around what
21 can influence positive school climate and there's a
22 lot of research out there around the importance of
23 school climate for youth and children's behavioral
24 health as well.

25 Q I believe you assisted in drafting an

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1 article --

2 A Yes.

3 Q -- on this subject, correct?

4 A Yes.

5 Q We'll talk about that in a bit, but just
6 to stick with this issue brief, did DBHDD approve
7 for publication by the Center of Excellence an issue
8 brief concerning the Georgia Apex Program and school
9 climate?

10 A I am not sure about this one. I have been
11 much more involved in the writings, the academic
12 papers and manuscripts, which they partnered with us
13 and approved.

14 I do not remember seeing this brief, as I
15 kind of have gone through for something else,
16 looking at the briefs that we have. So I'm not sure
17 on this one.

18 Q We'll actually stop there.

19 Let me first ask before we take a break,
20 has the Center of Excellence developed any other
21 issue briefs at the request of OCYF staff relating
22 to the Apex program since 2020?

23 A There were several briefs, and I can't
24 remember all the different, but, yes, I think we've
25 done at least three to four issue briefs, and they

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1 would be posted on our website.

2 Q Has the Center of Excellence, since you
3 joined nine years ago, drafted any issue briefs for
4 the Georgia Department of Education?

5 A No. I think in addition to some of the
6 briefs we've talked about for Apex, there are also
7 issue briefs that summarize the evaluation results
8 per year. And so those are also made publicly
9 available on our website, for Apex specifically.

10 Q If the Department of Behavioral Health and
11 Developmental Disabilities requested of the Center
12 of Excellence that they draft an issue brief
13 relating to the GNETS program, is that something
14 that the Center of Excellence would have the
15 capacity to do?

16 A I think so.

17 Q To be clear, that request has never been
18 made to you?

19 A No. Not to my knowledge.

20 MR. HOLKINS: Let's go ahead and take our
21 break, and we can do 15 minutes.

22 MR. BEDARD: Okay.

23 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Off the record at 4:31
24 p.m.

25 (A recess was taken.)

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1 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Back on the record at
2 4:46 p.m.

3 BY MR. HOLKINS:

4 Q Welcome back.

5 A Thank you.

6 Q So I'd like to jump right into another
7 document. Give me a second and I will pull it up.

8 MR. HOLKINS: I'm publishing what we're
9 marking as Exhibit 343.

10 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-343 was
11 marked for identification.)

12 MR. HOLKINS: The Bates number on the
13 first page of this document is GA00649808.

14 BY MR. HOLKINS:

15 Q The most recent email in this thread is
16 from you. It's dated September 20, 2019, to Dante
17 McKay.

18 I want to give you a moment to familiarize
19 yourself with the emails. Just for your reference,
20 we're going to be talking about only Dante's --
21 Dante McKay's email dated September 29, 2019, and
22 your response.

23 I'll give you control.

24 A Thank you. I need a minute on this one
25 because it's not fully ringing a bell.

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1 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

2 A Okay.

3 Q Have you reviewed the exhibit?

4 A I have.

5 Q So I'm going to go ahead and take control
6 back.

7 A Okay.

8 Q I want to move up in the thread to Mr.
9 McKay's email addressed to you dated September 20,
10 2019.

11 That's what I'm showing on the screen now.
12 Do you see it?

13 A I do.

14 Q He references Georgia's Project LAUNCH
15 grant focused on Muscogee. Do you see that?

16 A Yes.

17 Q What is Project LAUNCH?

18 A Project LAUNCH is a grant that I believe
19 happened through SAMHSA. It is no longer in
20 progress, but it was to focus in on providing
21 connections and socioemotional services for younger
22 children, and it was happening in Muscogee County.

23 I was not involved in Project LAUNCH.
24 Angie Snyder was the one who was overseeing that
25 work.

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1 Q My understanding, based on this email, is
2 that this grant was implemented only in Muscogee
3 County; is that correct?

4 A Yes.

5 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

6 Q Let me just rephrase.

7 In Georgia the Project LAUNCH grant
8 focused on Muscogee County exclusively, correct?

9 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

10 A Yes, yes. Project LAUNCH is a larger kind
11 of national mechanism in terms of through SAMHSA in
12 doing some of this work. But, yes, in Georgia this
13 was done in Muscogee.

14 Q Had Project LAUNCH grants been implemented
15 in counties other than Muscogee in Georgia?

16 A I don't believe so. But I -- I'm just not
17 sure.

18 Q Okay. What was being envisioned in this
19 discussion between Dante McKay and you?

20 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

21 A I'm having to think back here. This was
22 an opportunity that I think Jen Kaminski at CDC
23 raised about potentially putting forth a proposal
24 through CDC to augment mental health, and that there
25 may have been some funding available.

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1 It did not come to fruition.

2 Q Why not?

3 A I'm not sure. I know that -- I believe,
4 and I would have to look back, that the proposal
5 kind of went up chains and was being reviewed, but I
6 don't remember hearing back from Jen in terms of
7 moving forward.

8 And it may be because it was right around
9 the time that COVID happened and some of those
10 things kind of had a standstill. But I don't know
11 the reasons behind it.

12 Q Did you have --

13 MS. COHEN: Patrick, excuse me. I'm
14 hearing this is Exhibit 344 that you're talking
15 about.

16 MR. HOLKINS: This is actually 343, and
17 the reason why is because there was an
18 attachment to my previous email that we did not
19 introduce.

20 MS. COHEN: Got it. Let me ask folks who
21 are giving me that advice.

22 Sandra, ask her. She's on Zoom.

23 MR. HOLKINS: But I'm sure.

24 MS. COHEN: Okay.

25 MR. HOLKINS: And more importantly, so is

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1 Wanda.

2 MS. COHEN: If Wanda is sure.

3 BY MR. HOLKINS:

4 Q Did you have any discussions with
5 Commissioner Fitzgerald about expanding the Project
6 LAUNCH grant to other counties in Georgia?

7 A I did not personally. I think Dante had
8 the conversations with Commissioner Fitzgerald.

9 Q I think you testified that this was
10 reviewed up the chain. What are you referring to?

11 A What I meant was that the proposal was put
12 together -- Jen put together the proposal and sent
13 to some of the folks at CDC. And so it needed to be
14 reviewed and approved, and I'm not quite sure where
15 it landed.

16 Q Did you hear anything more back from the
17 CDC contact regarding the status of this proposal?

18 A That's what I was mentioning. If I recall
19 back, that there were some emails about it still
20 being reviewed, but I don't remember getting an
21 email that it was not happening. I know it didn't
22 happen because we haven't moved forward.

23 Q I was trying to understand your previous
24 testimony about Project LAUNCH broadly. Did you say
25 that that grant has been discontinued?

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1 A So the Project LAUNCH grant that, that
2 Georgia had, yes. I can't remember the exact year
3 when it ended. It was going on when I first started
4 with Georgia State University, but I believe it
5 ended several years ago.

6 Q So the Project LAUNCH grant operated by
7 SAMHSA nationally is still available, correct?

8 A I believe so.

9 Q To your knowledge, Georgia is not pursuing
10 that grant currently?

11 A We are not involved. I don't know if
12 there are other folks, other agencies who may have
13 pursued a Project LAUNCH grant.

14 Q And to the best of your knowledge, sitting
15 here today, do you know whether any state agency in
16 Georgia is pursuing a Project LAUNCH grant?

17 A I don't -- I don't -- I don't know.

18 Q If DBHDD were working on a project grant
19 application, would you expect them to tell you?

20 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

21 A I would expect them to tell us if they
22 wanted to partner with us on that. If they were
23 partnering with others, then they may not tell us.

24 Q Has DBHDD, to your knowledge, partnered
25 with any other organizations as evaluation partners

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1 on federal grants?

2 A On federal -- not to my knowledge.

3 The groups within DBHDD that we work with.

4 There may be other groups that work with other
5 universities, yes.

6 Q Let me just reask the question so that
7 it's clear.

8 To your knowledge, has OCYF partnered with
9 organizations other than COE as an evaluation
10 consultant for a federal grant?

11 A I would say for the most part we are
12 their, their evaluation partner.

13 Q So just to restate the question, are you
14 aware of OCYF partnering with any organizations
15 other than COE as an evaluation consultant?

16 A For federal grants?

17 Q For a federal grant.

18 A No.

19 Q And what about for a non-federal grant?

20 A They may -- I know they've worked with
21 Voices for Georgia's Children to conduct, for
22 example, some focus group, trying to get some
23 information, those types of things. But I don't
24 know in terms of -- I don't know in terms of large
25 organizations.

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1 Q Could you describe briefly what Voices for
2 Georgia's Children does?

3 A So that is an advocacy organization in
4 Georgia for children that focuses on children's
5 health, on mental health, on safety, on all kinds of
6 things.

7 Q Let's set this one aside.

8 Give me one second. I'm going to show you
9 some more documents.

10 MR. HOLKINS: I just published what we're
11 marking as Exhibit 344.

12 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-344 was
13 marked for identification.)

14 MR. HOLKINS: The first page of this
15 document is stamped GA03270155.

16 BY MR. HOLKINS:

17 Q From its cover it appears to be an email
18 from you dated September 29, 2021, to a number of
19 recipients, and it appears to attach a document
20 titled "Advancing School Mental Health
21 Conference_SBMH, in Georgia and School Climate."

22 I'll give you a moment to review the
23 document, if you like, and just let me know when
24 you're finished.

25 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

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1 A Okay. I'm finished.

2 Q Are you finished?

3 A Yes.

4 Q Thank you. I'm going to take back control
5 of the document and scroll to the top.

6 So if I'm not mistaken, this email is
7 about a presentation concerning the article that we
8 discussed earlier concerning Apex and school
9 climate, correct?

10 A Yes, correct.

11 Q And that's an article that you co-wrote
12 with Garry McGiboney and a number of other
13 individuals. Is that accurate?

14 A Yes. I was the lead author and then I
15 wrote it with staff, my staff, and then we included
16 our partners that are listed here at DBHDD, and
17 Garry McGiboney was the representative at DOE.

18 Q Did you seek out Dr. McGiboney as a
19 partner in drafting this article?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Why?

22 A Because he has been -- or was a partner.
23 He was one of our go-to people at the Department of
24 Education and I respect his expertise.

25 And so because Apex is a partnership

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1 between behavioral health and education, I thought
2 it was important to involve all the relevant
3 partners.

4 Q Dr. McGiboney is no longer employed by the
5 Department of Education; is that accurate?

6 A That's accurate.

7 Q Since his departure from the Department of
8 Education, who at GaDOE serves as your go-to?

9 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

10 A I would say we don't have someone that we
11 connect with as much. I would say probably the
12 person -- and it's not me as much as the Apex group,
13 is probably Ashley Harris.

14 Q So you note in your email dated 9/29/2021
15 that you are attaching a draft of slides for review
16 and feedback.

17 These are slides about the article --

18 A Yes.

19 Q -- that we just discussed, correct?

20 A Yes.

21 Q I'm going to pull up those slides. Give
22 me one second and I'll show them to you.

23 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
24 we're marking as Exhibit 345.

25 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-345 was

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1 marked for identification.)

2 MR. HOLKINS: This is a native file
3 version of the document produced by the State
4 of Georgia to the United States in this matter
5 with the Bates-stamp GA03270157.

6 BY MR. HOLKINS:

7 Q Do you recognize this document?

8 A Yes.

9 Q What is this document?

10 A These are the slides that were presented
11 at the Advancing School Mental Health Conference,
12 that relate to the analysis that we did for the
13 article that we published, that was a more rigorous
14 analysis of schools with Apex versus schools
15 without, and looking at potential association with
16 school climate over time.

17 Q Just for the record, this was a
18 presentation that you gave in October of 2021,
19 correct?

20 A Yes.

21 Q So I want to just walk through the slides
22 and ask you some specific questions about material
23 that are on the slides. So we'll just go one by
24 one.

25 A Sure.

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1 Q I'm scrolling down. We're now on Page 5
2 of the document.

3 I want to direct your attention to the
4 text that's to the right of the Georgia Department
5 of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.
6 Specifically it reads: "State agency with oversight
7 of public mental health system for children, youth
8 and adults."

9 Do you see that text?

10 A Yes.

11 Q What informed this statement?

12 A This is a slide that the Apex team has put
13 together to really identify who the core
14 stakeholders are for the Apex program, and so it's
15 the, the definition of who DBHDD is. It's,
16 obviously, been reviewed by them as well.

17 Q By DBHDD staff?

18 A Yes, because they needed to review the
19 slides and the information that's in them.

20 Q Did Dante McKay specifically sign off on
21 these slides?

22 A Yes, and he signed off on the paper.

23 Q I want to now direct your attention to the
24 text corresponding to the Georgia Department of
25 Education, or GaDOE. Specifically the slide reads:

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1 "State agency that provides publicly available data
2 regarding the educational outcomes and well-being of
3 students."

4 What publicly available data regarding the
5 educational outcomes and well-being of students are
6 you reference, here?

7 A These are data based on the student
8 surveys that they administer and handle annually.
9 So those were the data we were able to use to look
10 at school climate, and it's available on their
11 website.

12 Q And did the Center of Excellence receive
13 any additional data from the Georgia Department of
14 Education in connection with this article?

15 A I don't believe so. We really pulled the
16 public data and looked at the way that they
17 determined school climate and the overall star
18 rating, which is the school climate index.

19 And so we did pull in not necessarily from
20 DOE, but we have the Apex data of number of schools
21 served, number of providers, and those types of
22 things, that was in addition to the public DOE data.

23 Q So all the DOE data you received in
24 connection with this article was publicly available,
25 correct?

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1 A It's from the school climate -- the
2 student health survey and the school climate
3 ratings, yes.

4 Q Stepping away just for a moment from this
5 presentation and the underlying article, are you
6 aware of any data sharing agreement currently in
7 place between the Center of Excellence and the
8 Department of Education?

9 A No. We would like to -- I think there
10 have been discussions around that, but we don't have
11 an official agreement.

12 Q Why would you like to have such an
13 agreement?

14 A I think the discussions have been it would
15 be helpful in terms of evaluation. To be able to
16 also look at -- there are some data around the
17 student health survey around suicidal ideation and
18 those types of things that we thought would also be
19 helpful to pull in.

20 And so, yeah.

21 Q Would it have been -- what's your
22 understanding of the barriers to achieving a data
23 sharing agreement with the Georgia Department of
24 Education and the Center of Excellence?

25 A I think there's the normal barriers of big

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1 systems and organizations and approvals and, you
2 know, I think that every agency, rightfully so, has
3 to look out for their data. Yeah.

4 Q How long have these discussions around a
5 data sharing agreement between the Center of
6 Excellence and the Georgia Department of Education
7 been occurring?

8 A A couple of years.

9 Q So at least dating back to 2020? Is that
10 accurate?

11 A I think so. Not necessarily formal
12 conversations. Informal conversations. And those
13 who are more involved in the Apex program can
14 probably give more specific details.

15 Q Who at the Georgia Department of Education
16 has been involved in these discussions around
17 developing the data sharing protocol?

18 A I believe it's Ashley Harris.

19 Q I'm scrolling down to Slide 9, which is
20 titled, "Apex Growth Across 5 years (2015-2020)."

21 Do you see the slide that I'm referencing?

22 A I do.

23 Q The third image on the right, and the text
24 underneath it represents that there has been a "238%
25 increase in services provided in schools from Year 1

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1 to Year 5." Correct?

2 Is that accurate?

3 A Yes, I believe it is.

4 Q Where did you receive this data?

5 A Those are data that we have collected over
6 the years in terms of the agencies provide monthly
7 reports, in terms of number of schools served, and
8 these are looked at periodically and then annually.

9 So that the team -- I am not directly
10 involved, but the team then pulls together the data
11 on number of students -- number of schools, number
12 of students receiving first time services, and
13 number of services provided, and then looking at the
14 increase over time.

15 Q As part of that effort, does the Center of
16 Excellence undertake any analysis of the amount,
17 frequency or duration of services received through
18 the Apex program by students?

19 A In terms of number of services, yes. In
20 terms of how long the kids are seen for, I don't
21 believe that we're collecting that. That may be
22 something that they are moving to collect, and those
23 more intimately involved in the program could answer
24 that.

25 Q There's nothing on this slide, and correct

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1 me if I'm mistaken, that would speak to amount,
2 frequency or duration of service for children who
3 are enrolled in the Apex program?

4 A In terms of -- no, not in terms of, you
5 know, how many times a month a child was seen or for
6 how long they were seen.

7 Q For the -- moving just to the center, the
8 -- excuse me -- the image in the middle of the page
9 and the corresponding text, which reads: "100%
10 increase in students receiving first-time services
11 from Year 1 to Year 5."

12 Do you see that text?

13 A Yes.

14 Q Is it possible that a student could
15 receive one service --

16 MR. HOLKINS: Let me rephrase.

17 Q Is it possible that each student enrolled
18 in Apex could receive one unit of service and that
19 would qualify that student as a first-time recipient
20 for purposes of this data?

21 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

22 A That's a great question. I would have to
23 go back to see how they define. I know that there
24 are definitions in terms of how long the school is
25 involved in the program.

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1 In terms of whether a student received
2 one, two times, three times, I don't believe that
3 that is entered into this number. First-time
4 students are described as those who haven't received
5 any type of mental health treatment in the past.

6 Q But to be -- to qualify as a first-time
7 student, how much service do you have to receive?

8 A It's a great question. I think any
9 services, but I'm not positive about that.

10 Q I want to now dig into the results of the
11 study which you report in this presentation.

12 I'd like to start with Page 14. The title
13 for this slide is: Means School Climate, Star
14 Rating from Baseline to Endline for Apex and
15 non-Apex Schools."

16 With the understanding that we're not
17 researchers, could you help explain in layman's
18 terms what this slide shows?

19 A Yes. So the overall star rating is the
20 main school climate index that takes into account
21 attendance, discipline, all those pieces put
22 together. And there are elaborate instructions on
23 the DOE website about how that's computed.

24 A higher rating means more positive school
25 climate. So we have two matched groups here. We

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1 have the Apex group and then we were able to pull a
2 similar number of schools that did not receive Apex
3 but that were matched on things like receiving free
4 and reduced lunch, type of school, those types of
5 things.

6 Because we weren't able to do a randomized
7 control trial, we still wanted to be able to see
8 more rigorously the impact Apex might have.

9 So what you see on this slide is that from
10 baseline in 2015 to endline 2019, over those four
11 years, those schools that received Apex had a
12 significantly greater increase in their school
13 climate, positive increase in their school climate,
14 than those schools that did not receive Apex.

15 Q Thank you.

16 Just as a practical matter, what's the
17 difference between a 4.04 school climate rating and
18 a 3.92 school climate rating?

19 A It's just a matter of kind of where it
20 falls on the star rating. I would have to go back
21 in terms of -- obviously, 1 is poor and 5 is best,
22 and then it's somewhere in between.

23 What we looked at a little bit more, too,
24 was the actual increase over time.

25 Q Between 2015 and 2019?

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1 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)
2 Q Is that a yes?
3 A Yes. I'm sorry.
4 Q So I would ask that you provide the same
5 service with respect to the slide. Could you
6 describe -- we're know on Page 15 of the PowerPoint.
7 Could you describe what this slide shows?
8 A Yes. So this is a slide that is looking
9 at student discipline rate. And so if it's -- if
10 the index is going up, it's a more positive rate,
11 which means that there were fewer disciplinary
12 incidents over time. It's a little bit
13 counterintuitive, but that's the way it's measured.
14 What you see in this slide is that those
15 schools involved in Apex had a significantly greater
16 increase in time in terms of positive discipline
17 rate. So they had a greater decrease in
18 disciplinary incidents than those schools not
19 involved in Apex, whose discipline rate actually
20 went down slightly.
21 Q Thank you. Let's move on to the next
22 slide, which is Slide 16.
23 The title is "Means Student Attendance
24 Rate from Baseline to Endline for Apex and non-Apex
25 Schools."

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1 Can you describe what this slide shows?
2 A Yes. Similarly looking from baseline to
3 endline, what we saw were that those schools that
4 were involved in Apex had a significantly positive
5 increase and a better attendance rate over time than
6 those schools not involved in Apex. So in terms of
7 students missing school for a variety of reasons.

8 Q I'm not going to ask you to explain this
9 one because I think we would be here for a long
10 time, but let me just see if I have any more
11 questions on this document.

12 A Sure.

13 Q I do want to show you one more thing in
14 the Summary of Key Findings section --

15 A Yes.

16 Q -- of the presentation.

17 The presentation reads: "Length of
18 program participation was not significantly
19 associated with school climate."

20 Could you explain that finding?

21 A I can give our hypothesis around that.

22 So we looked at, in terms of those schools
23 participating in Apex, whether there was a
24 relationship between the length of time in the
25 program and an increase in positive school climate.

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1 We did not see that those were associated in our
2 analyses.

3 One potential idea is that schools may
4 have started at different times and had different
5 levels of sophistication in terms of their program,
6 which may have impacted a little bit -- may have
7 diluted the relationship between length of
8 participation and the outcome.

9 Q So let's set this aside.

10 Are you aware of whether DBHDD policy
11 allows for GNETS facilities to participate in the
12 Apex program?

13 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

14 A I do not know what their policies say. I
15 know that there have been, I believe, one or two
16 schools in the list of schools participating, but I
17 don't have any of the details.

18 Q What are the schools that you can recall,
19 the GNETS facilities that can you recall that have
20 participated in Apex?

21 A I don't know the answer to that. I don't
22 know the names.

23 Q Is it your recollection that it's no more
24 than one or two? Is that accurate?

25 A That's my recollection, but for my

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1 accurate information, I would speak with those who
2 are really involved in the program.

3 Q What was the time frame, if you can
4 recall, for when GNETS facilities were participating
5 in Apex?

6 A I don't know.

7 Q And sitting here today. Are you aware of
8 any single GNETS facility that is able to enroll in
9 the Apex program?

10 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

11 A I don't know if the same schools that were
12 involved initially are still currently participating
13 or not. I don't have that level of detail.

14 Q Do you have any reason to believe that
15 GNETS facilities would not benefit from the same
16 advantages of participating in Apex as you observed
17 through this study in other schools?

18 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

19 A Do I have any -- let me make sure I
20 understand your question.

21 Q Sure.

22 A I don't believe there's any reason that
23 they would not benefit.

24 Q So on the topic of GNETS, I just want to
25 run through some questions.

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1 Do you have any duties in your capacity at
2 the Center of Excellence or the Health Policy Center
3 with respect to the GNETS program?

4 A No. The only thing is what we talked
5 about briefly before, where I believe that some of
6 my staff were working with the South Metro. That's
7 the only.

8 Q That's the only involvement that you can
9 recall for the entire Center of Excellence, correct?

10 A Yes.

11 Q And personally you've not had any direct
12 involvement with the GNETS program in your capacity
13 at the Center of Excellence?

14 A No.

15 Q Are you familiar with the behavioral
16 health services and interventions that are made
17 available to students enrolled in the GNETS program?

18 A No. I don't know the level and a lot of
19 the details about the GNETS programs themselves.

20 Q Have you ever received or reviewed any
21 data in connection with the GNETS program?

22 A No.

23 Q Has any state agency staff ever requested
24 that the Center of Excellence or you directly
25 perform analysis with respect to the GNETS program?

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1 A Not to my knowledge, no.

2 Q Have you ever visited a GNETS facility?

3 A No.

4 Q Do any staff at the Center of Excellence
5 visit GNETS facilities as a matter of course?

6 A I don't believe so. Aside from -- aside
7 from potentially the training that may have happened
8 around wraparound with South Metro.

9 MR. HOLKINS: So I think we can take just
10 a brief break, five minutes, and then we'll
11 kind of talk. I have maybe just a few more
12 questions, perhaps a document or two, but I
13 think we'll be able to end before 6:00.

14 We can go off the record.

15 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Off the record at 5:22
16 p.m.

17 (A recess was taken.)

18 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Back on the record at
19 5:29 p.m.

20 BY MR. HOLKINS:

21 Q So I'd like to show you just a few more
22 documents. Give me one second and I will pull them
23 up.

24 MR. HOLKINS: I've just published what
25 we're marking as Exhibit 346.

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1 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-346 was
2 marked for identification.)

3 MR. HOLKINS: The Bates-stamp for this
4 document is GA00401660.

5 BY MR. HOLKINS:

6 Q It appears to be an email from you dated
7 October 26, 2015, with the subject "Slides for New
8 Orleans Presentation," and attaches a PowerPoint.

9 I will give you a moment to review this
10 document. I know it's from 2015, and please let me
11 know when you're finished.

12 (Witness reviews exhibit.)

13 A Okay.

14 Q If I'm not mistaken, the topic of this
15 email is a presentation you were preparing to give
16 along with Deborah Gay and Matt Yancey. Is that
17 correct?

18 A That's correct.

19 Q Who is Deborah Gay?

20 A Deborah Gay was our first contact over at
21 the Department of Education, and she also was at one
22 time co-chair of the Interagency Directors Team as
23 well.

24 I believe she retired.

25 Q Do you recall when she retired?

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1 A I don't. All the years are running
2 together.

3 Q Who is Matt Yancey?

4 A So Matt Yancey was in the position that
5 Dante McKay has now. Back in 2015 -- I'm not sure.
6 He was there for maybe a year, but he was our OCYF
7 point of contact at that time, and the whole idea
8 behind Apex actually initiated with him.

9 Q So I'd like to show you the slides that
10 you attached to this email. Give me one second and
11 I will pull them up.

12 MR. HOLKINS: I just published Exhibit
13 347.

14 (WHEREUPON, Plaintiff's Exhibit-347 was
15 marked for identification.)

16 MR. HOLKINS: This is a native file
17 version of the document produced by the State
18 of Georgia to the United States in this
19 litigation with the Bates-stamp GA00401661.

20 BY MR. HOLKINS:

21 Q I realize this is a little small. Let me
22 see if I can make it bigger.

23 A Thank you.

24 Q That's better?

25 A Thank you.

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1 Q Do you recognize this document?

2 A I do. I'm embarrassed to say I don't
3 remember a whole lot about it back from 2015.

4 Q So we'll just walk through the slide one
5 by one. I'll ask you a few questions about the
6 text.

7 A Okay.

8 Q First, let's just start with the title
9 page, which identifies this as a presentation given
10 in November 2015 at the 20th Annual Conference on
11 Advancing School Mental Health.

12 A Correct?

13 A Yes.

14 Q This was a presentation you gave with
15 Deborah Gay and Matt Yancey, correct?

16 A Yes.

17 Q The title of the presentation is "The
18 Georgia School-based Mental Health, Community Level
19 Partnerships and Research to Further School-based
20 Mental Health."

21 A Is that accurate?

22 A Yes.

23 Q I wanted to direct your attention to the
24 third bullet on this page of the presentation, which
25 is the third page. The bullet reads -- first the

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1 title of this slide is "Why School Based Mental
2 Health?"

3 The third bullet reads: "Reduces access
4 issues, particularly in rural areas, and decreases
5 sigma by normalizing mental health treatment."

6 Could you expand on how school-based
7 mental health reduces access issues, particularly in
8 rural areas?

9 A Sure. The idea that school is where -- is
10 where children spend -- they spend the majority of
11 their time, and to be able to have children access
12 mental health issues and also within the culture to
13 have mental health normalized, have those
14 conversations happen, it reduces access -- it
15 reduces access issues because it's not reliant on a
16 parent having to bring the youth to each session.
17 They can be seen within the school, obviously with
18 parental consent.

19 I think particularly in rural areas where
20 there may be a lot of distance between providers and
21 all of that as well, it just helps to centralize
22 service somewhat.

23 Q Let's scroll back to that same slide.

24 Is expanding school-based mental health
25 services a part of the mission of the Center of

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1 Excellence?

2 A Yes, in partnership with the other
3 agencies that we work with.

4 Q So is that part of the mission for the
5 Center of Excellence driven by the State agencies,
6 or is that independently a goal for the Center of
7 Excellence?

8 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

9 A It's independently a goal for the COE. We
10 believe in the benefits of school-based mental
11 health.

12 Q And what is that based on?

13 A It's based on some of the research that
14 we've done. It's based on a review of the
15 evidence-based and the research that is out there.
16 It is based on the idea of needing to find creative
17 ways to provide access to children for mental health
18 needs, particularly as these needs increase.

19 Q So you reference the evidence-based, the
20 research as part of school-based mental health?

21 A Uh-hum. (Affirmative.)

22 Q Could you describe broadly what the
23 research shows?

24 A There is -- there are a lot of different
25 models of school-based mental health. There is the

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1 Apex program. There are -- embedding within school
2 based health centers.

3 There is research out there in addition to
4 ours around the relationship between school-based
5 mental health services, helping to improve overall
6 school climate.

7 I think there are some studies that have
8 looked at improving student outcomes. We have not
9 been involved in those particularly.

10 Q Just to make sure I'm clear, there have
11 been studies showing improved outcomes for children
12 who receive school-based mental health services; is
13 that accurate?

14 A Yes, I believe so.

15 Q Are you aware of any studies showing
16 improved outcomes for students who are enrolled in
17 GNETS facilities?

18 A I'm not aware of any studies. I haven't
19 really looked for those.

20 Q Has the Center of Excellence ever studied
21 the effectiveness of services provided --

22 MR. HOLKINS: Let me try again.

23 Q Has the Center of Excellence ever studied
24 whether children enrolled in GNETS receive --
25 experience better outcomes?

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1 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

2 A No.

3 MR. HOLKINS: Thank you for indulging us.

4 BY MR. HOLKINS:

5 Q Is it fair to say that the GNETS program
6 is not the kind of school-based mental health
7 service that has been the subject of the Center of
8 Excellence's research?

9 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

10 A That is fair to say.

11 Q Likewise, is it fair to say that the GNETS
12 program has not been the kind of school-based mental
13 health service that's been the subject of the other
14 research that you've seen?

15 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

16 A That's fair to say. Of the research that
17 I have reviewed, there's not been a focus on GNETS.

18 Q Are you aware of any evidence-based
19 supporting provision of behavioral health services
20 and interventions in GNETS schools?

21 A No. I haven't looked for that.

22 Q Has anyone at the Department of Behavioral
23 Health and Developmental Disabilities requested that
24 you look for that research?

25 A No.

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1 Q You testified that you've not looked for
2 research regarding any evidence-base and support of
3 the GNETS model; is that accurate?

4 A That's correct.

5 Q Why not?

6 A That has not been a focus of one of the
7 models we've been looking at.

8 We focused on -- I mean our, our work with
9 the State has been around the Apex program, which is
10 a specific model of integrating a community provider
11 within the schools.

12 I think there are others who are doing
13 models around the -- having more of a health unit
14 within the schools, in which mental health is a part
15 of that.

16 But I guess that's just not something that
17 we've engaged in research around, nor have we been
18 asked to engaged in research around GNETS.

19 Q Just to be clear, providing therapy
20 interventions in a segregated setting has not been
21 the subject of any research by the Center of
22 Excellence?

23 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

24 A Not within a school setting. I think, as
25 we talked about previously, some of the work, the

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1 monitoring and evaluation that Susan and her team
2 have been involved in around Crisis Stabilization
3 Units, PRTFs, but those are not GNETS.

4 Q Right. Thank you for drawing that
5 distinction.

6 Between a segregated treatment facility
7 versus a segregated educational facility, which is
8 what GNETS is, correct?

9 A Yes.

10 Q And just to restate the question, you're
11 not aware of any --

12 MR. HOLKINS: Actually, withdraw that.

13 Q In your mind, what distinguishes
14 school-based mental health services as you've
15 studied from the services that are provided in a
16 GNETS setting?

17 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

18 A I will answer to the best of my ability
19 given that I don't know fully what that whole GNET
20 program entails. But I think the differences are --
21 my understanding is in a GNETS program you have
22 youth that have been referred from local schools,
23 who then are in a school -- a school setting with
24 each other, and they receive more intensive
25 behavioral health, socioemotional health services in

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1 addition to their education.

2 The school-based mental health programs
3 that we're talking about are in regular public
4 schools in which mental health is integrated into
5 the culture and the community-based providers
6 provide services within that school setting.

7 Q Are there advantages to integrating those
8 services, as you said, into the culture of a general
9 education facility?

10 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

11 A In my opinion, I believe so. I believe
12 that integrating mental health services within the
13 schools helps to address access issues and can help
14 to reduce stigma, as we've talked about in terms of
15 normalizing some of those conversations.

16 Q I want to direct you to another slide.
17 This is Slide 5.

18 The title of the slide is "Environmental
19 Scan on School Based Mental Health: Results that
20 informed Georgia's efforts."

21 Could you describe the environmental scan
22 that's referenced in this slide?

23 A I can. I was not the one who completed
24 it. It was the Apex staff who were involved, so I
25 won't be able to provide details.

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1 But basically we did a review of folks who
2 were doing school-based mental health in Georgia.
3 We also looked at South Carolina as a model, and
4 they have got a lot of school-based mental health
5 work happening, and some of these other states here.

6 And then also looked -- we also have a
7 technical -- technical transfer center. It's funded
8 through -- I believe it's funded through SAMHSA,
9 that also does some school-based mental health work
10 in Georgia, and just tried to pull together across
11 what we were seeing what, what common and effective
12 models might be to help inform services.

13 I think that's where we also learned that
14 the more integrated a provider is within that school
15 setting, the more effective they might be.

16 Q Were the results of this environmental
17 scan published by the Center of Excellence?

18 A We have a brief that identifies the
19 results from this. The full kind of 40-page report
20 was not put out there, but there is a brief that
21 puts those results out there.

22 Q The full 40-page report, was that
23 circulated to staff at OCYF?

24 A I believe so, because it helped to inform
25 the efforts.

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1 Q So I'm going to scroll a few slides down,
2 to Slide 9.

3 I want to direct your attention first to
4 the title: "Role of Community Partners," and to the
5 first billet, which reads: "SBMH is an inherently
6 collaborative process."

7 SBMH stands for school-based mental
8 health, correct?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Could you expand on this statement?

11 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

12 Q So let me reask. Why is school-based
13 mental health an inherently collaborative process?

14 A It is an inherently collaborative process,
15 this relates to the title of the presentation around
16 System of Care as well, in that again it's the
17 involvement of multiple partners around this
18 conversation about mental health and normalizing
19 mental health.

20 So if you have all these different
21 organizations here who are in support of and
22 promoting this work, again it's talking about
23 advocating for services within the schools. And so
24 talking about an overall System of Care, holistic
25 care for the youth.

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1 Q I think we can put this document aside for
2 now.

3 How would you describe the role broadly of
4 the Center of Excellence in Georgia's System of Care
5 for children and adolescents with behavioral health
6 conditions?

7 A The Center of Excellence has a very
8 central role in Georgia's center of care.

9 We have brought on board, I believe it was
10 in 2019, the director of System of Care, who really
11 oversees and chairs the Interagency Directors Team.

12 We have been integrally involved in
13 working with the IDT to develop the state plan,
14 System of Care State Plan for behavioral health.
15 They're in their second iteration, and school-based
16 mental health is a part of that plan.

17 So we do a lot of backbone research,
18 facilitation, bring groups together. There are
19 multiple work groups who are addressing some of
20 those pieces of scopes of work, and we have a staff
21 that works very closely on that.

22 Q Do staff at the Center of Excellence have
23 a role in shaping strategic planning for
24 school-based mental health services in the State of
25 Georgia?

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1 A We have a role in consulting and being
2 part of collaboratives and leadership committees
3 that can inform those conversations, yes.

4 Q Is it fair to say that the State agency
5 staff are mainly responsible for determining
6 strategic policy -- excuse me -- strategic planning
7 for school-based mental health services in Georgia?

8 MR. BEDARD: Object to form.

9 A It depends on the program. For a
10 statewide state funded program, yes, they would be
11 responsible for, for funding and for doing the
12 strategic policy for that.

13 If it is another organization who is
14 providing services around school-based mental
15 health, then maybe not.

16 Q Is it fair to say that the work of the
17 Center of Excellence in expanding school-based
18 mental health services in Georgia depends upon a
19 close relationship with the child-serving agencies
20 in the State?

21 A Yes.

22 Q I'm going to ask you some questions about
23 your preparation for the deposition. I'm not asking
24 you to reveal any -- the substance of any
25 communications that you had with your attorney in

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1 preparation for the deposition.

2 With that preface, what did you do to
3 prepare for today's deposition?

4 A The only thing I did to prepare was to
5 meet once with Ed Bedard.

6 Q And Mr. Bedard is your attorney for
7 purposes of this deposition, correct?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Did you review any documents --

10 A No.

11 Q -- in preparation?

12 A No.

13 MR. HOLKINS: Let me just quickly confer.

14 I think that we're done. Thank you very
15 much for your time.

16 THE WITNESS: My pleasure.

17 MS. COHEN: It was a pleasure to meet you.

18 MR. HOLKINS: If you have questions.

19 MR. BEDARD: If I can take one minute.

20 Nobody needs to go anywhere.

21 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Stay on the record?

22 MR. BEDARD: We can go off the record for
23 a second.

24 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Off the record at 5:51
25 p.m.

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1 (Discussion ensued off the record.)

2 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Back on the record at
3 5:53 p.m.

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY MR. BEDARD:

6 Q Thank you, Ms. DiGirolamo. I'm going to
7 -- hopefully I've got that right.

8 Just one or two questions.

9 Is it fair to say that in your experience
10 in engaging in strategic planning for school-based
11 mental health programs that who's responsible for
12 the strategic planning for any particular
13 school-based mental health program depends on that
14 particular program?

15 MR. HOLKINS: Object to form.

16 MR. BEDARD: Let me rephrase.

17 BY MR. BEDARD:

18 Q Is it fair to say that it depends on the
19 particular school-based mental health program --

20 MR. BEDARD: Strike that.

21 BY MR. BEDARD:

22 Q This is a bit of a long question, so I
23 want to make sure I'm getting it right and there are
24 a lot of words.

25 Is it fair to say that determining who is

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1 responsible for strategic planning for school-based
2 mental health for any particular school-based mental
3 health program depends on that particular
4 school-based mental health program?

5 MR. HOLKINS: Same objection.

6 A Yes, I think that's fair to say.

7 Q And is it fair to say that different
8 people may be responsible for different aspects of
9 strategic planning for any single school-based
10 mental health program?

11 A I think that's fair to say.

12 MR. BEDARD: That's all I've got.

13 MR. HOLKINS: Nothing further.

14 Thank you again for your time.

15 MS. COHEN: Thanks very much and thanks
16 for all the courtesies.

17 THE VIDEOGRAPHER: Off the record at 5:55
18 p.m.

19 (Whereupon, the deposition concluded at
20 5:55 p.m.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E
2

3 STATE OF GEORGIA:

4 FULTON COUNTY:

5
6 I hereby certify that the foregoing
7 transcript of ANN M. DIGIROLAMO was taken down, as
8 stated in the caption, and the questions and answers
9 thereto were reduced by stenographic means under my
10 direction;

11 That the foregoing Pages 1 through
12 95 represent a true and correct transcript of
13 the evidence given upon said hearing;

14 And I further certify that I am not of kin
15 or counsel to the parties in this case; am not in
16 the regular employ of counsel for any of said
17 parties; nor am I in anywise interested in the
18 result of said case.

19
20 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
21 subscribed my name this 5th day of August, 2022.

22 *Wanda L. Robinson*
23

24 Wanda L. Robinson, CRR, CCR No. B-1973
25 My Commission Expires 10/11/2023

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1 D I S C L O S U R E

2 STATE OF GEORGIA) VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITION OF
3 FULTON COUNTY) ANN M. DIGIROLAMO - 7/28/22
4 Pursuant to Article 10.B of the Rules and
5 Regulations of the Board of Court Reporting
6 of the Judicial Council of Georgia, I make the
7 following disclosure:

8 I am a Georgia certified court reporter.

9 I am here as a representative of Esquire Deposition
10 Solutions, LLC, and Esquire Deposition Solutions,
11 LLC was contacted by the offices of U.S. Attorney's
12 Office to provide court reporter services for this
13 deposition. Esquire Deposition Solutions, LLC will
14 not be taking this deposition under any contract
15 that is prohibited by O.C.G.A. 9-11-28 (c).

16 Esquire Deposition Solutions, LLC has no
17 contract/agreement to provide court reporter
18 services with any party to the case, or any counsel
19 in the case, or any reporter or reporting agency
20 from whom a referral might have been made to cover
this deposition.

21 Esquire Deposition Solutions, LLC will
22 charge the usual and customary rates to all parties
23 in the case, and a financial discount will not be
24 given to any party to this litigation.

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1 ERRATA SHEET FOR THE TRANSCRIPT OF:

2 Deponent Name: ANN M. DIGIROLAMO

3 Case Caption: United States of America vs. State
4 of Georgia

5 Case No. : 1:16-cv-03088-ELR

6 I do hereby certify that I have read all
7 questions propounded to me and all answers given by
me on the 28th day of July 2022, taken before Wanda
L. Robinson, and that:

8

9 1) There are no changes noted.

10 2) The following changes are noted:

11 Pursuant to state rules of Civil Procedure
12 and/or the Official Code of Georgia Annotated
13 9-11-30(e), both of which read in part: Any changes
14 in form or substance which you desire to make shall
be entered upon the deposition with a statement of
the reason given for making them.

14 Accordingly, to assist you in effecting
15 corrections, please use the form below:

16 CORRECTIONS:

17 _____

18 Page Line Change Reason For Change

19 _____

20 _____

21 _____

22 _____

23 _____

24 _____

25 _____

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1 CERTIFICATE OF DEPONENT

2

3 I hereby certify that I have read and examined

4 the foregoing transcript, and the same is a true and

5 accurate record of the testimony given by me. Any

6 additions or corrections that I feel are necessary,

7 I will attach on a separate sheet of paper to the

8 original transcript.

9

10 _____

11 Signature of Deponent

12

13 I hereby certify that the individual

14 representing himself/herself to be the above-named

15 individual, appeared before me this _____ day of

16 _____, 2022, and executed the above

17 certificate in my presence.

18

19 _____

20

21 NOTARY PUBLIC

22

23 MY COMMISSION EXPIRES:

24

25